DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 152 EA 013 202

AUTHOR Roberts, Jane M. E.
TITLE Coordination for the Improvement of Basic Skills.
INSTITUTION Maryland State Dept. of Education, Baltimore.; Research for Better Schools, Inc., Philadelphia, Pa.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 20 Nov 80
NOTE 31p.: Paper distributed to participants of the Maryland Basic Skills Conference, November 20, 1980.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Basic Skills; Cooperative Programs; *Coordination; *Educational Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Legislation; Federal Programs; Information Networks; Leadership; Motivation Techniques; Organizational Communication; Power Structure

ABSTRACT

The Title II Basic Skills legislation, which is part of the Educational Amendments of 1978, requires coordination of basic skills improvement among related federally-supported programs. Coordination, while essential, is made difficult by the proliferation of agencies and bureaus concerned with basic skills and by the need for autonomy among educators. A review of pertinent literature indicates that other barriers to coordination include a lack of resources, motivation, and leadership. Strategies to reduce these barriers are negotiation between organizations to establish operating procedures and concentration of power in the hands of one organization's authorities. After careful planning, coordination should be introduced cautiously in increments. In a complex collaborative effort, a matrix management or network communication structure may be more appropriate than the traditional pyramid. In the final analysis, coordination may not be an effective strategy in all circumstances and should not occur where it is infeasible or undesirable. (WD)

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COORDINATION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF BASIC SKILLS

by

Jane M. E. Roberts

This paper was prepared in response to a request from the Basic Skills staff of the Maryland State Department of Education, and distributed to participants of the Maryland Basic Skills Conference, November 20, 1980.

The work was supported by funds from the National Institute of Education. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the National Institute of Education or of the Maryland State Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

Published at: Research for Better Schools, Inc.
444 North Third Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19123

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INTRODUCTION

This paper was written as a resource document for basic skills staff of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and of the 24 local school systems. It may also be read by other audiences. That being the case, this section of the paper not only reviews the content presented, but also summarizes how and why the paper was developed.

The paper was developed by staff of the Regional Exchange of Research for Better Schools. The Exchange is part of a national network funded by the National Institute of Education to provide research-based information in support of statewide school improvement efforts. The request for a resource document was initiated by the MSDE basic skills team, who recognized that those involved in basic skills improvement might find it difficult or time consuming to collect and consider relevant information on coordination -- a process required by recent federal legislation. As the literature search and review progressed, MSDE and Exchange staff discussed some of the findings and implications. However, it was agreed that in no way should the paper based on the research be considered as policy guidelines.

This paper highlights a few of the federal initiatives and addresses the topic of coordination. While examples relate primarily to the new Title II legislation, the discussion of coordination is based on the studies of educational and organizational change, and is applicable in many situations. The purpose is not to prescribe but to inform, with a view to stimulating action -- recognizing that everything is not going to be coordinated all at once.

THE FEDERAL PERSPECTIVE

> ESEA has been in effect since 1965, and it is amazing that we haven't learned from this experience. With each program operating independently, and responding to different client groups, there have been few collaborative activities.
>
> (Schiffman & Smith, 1978)

The statement above is taken from a paper read at a symposium titled "Current Issues and Research in Basic Skills Achievement." While the statement represents the perspective of the Basic Skills Task Force within the U.S. Office of Education, it could equally well have been made by almost anyone -- researcher or practitioner -- who has looked at student achievement in basic skills, the range of federal programs relating to that concern, the unnecessary redundancy and "turfdom" occuring at school, district, state, and federal levels. The new U.S. Education Department is now encouraging us to coordinate our energy and other resources to improve the delivery of instruction in basic skills.

Two federal initiatives are of direct relevance: the Title II basic skills legislation and the coordination sections of the Education Division General Administrative Regulations. Each is summarized here in order to illustrate the context of the federal perspective. For more complete information, the reader is advised to consult the actual federal regulations.

Title II: Basic Skills

The Title II Basic Skills legislation (to which Title IX Section 921-2 on achievement testing assistance is closely related) is part of the Educational Amendments of 1978 relating to ESEA. The Basic Skills Program Office of the Bureau of School Improvement at the U.S. Education Department oversees Title II. Several of the staff involved have Right to Read experience. Basic skills are: reading, mathematics, and oral and written communication).

Title II has two main purposes: (1) to guide and provide resources for the improvement of basic skills, and (2) to encourage coordination across federally-supported programs relating to basic skills. The main elements of the legislation are presented in three tables. Table 1 lists the responsibilities of the state education agency (SEA). Table 2 lists the responsibilities of local education agencies (LEAs) and schools that receive Title II funding. Table 3 lists activities designed to increase parent involvement which may be funded through the SEA and carried out by an LEA or school. The underlying ideas include:

- Systematic and comprehensive planning and implementation
- Involvement of key interest groups
- Design and delivery of instruction appropriate to student needs and demonstrated by assessment data
- Direct parent involvement
- Coordination across educational agencies of both resources and ideas.

Table 1

Title II Basic Skills: Key Elements of State (SEA) Activities

State Education Agencies (SEAs), with advisory groups, will:

- Develop comprehensive, systematic statewide plans for basic skills improvement
- Coordinate available resources for elementary and secondary education
- Provide assistance to local agencies in development and implementation of comprehensive programs to improve
- Develop means for parent contribution to learning
- Provide State leadership regarding planning, execution, and evaluation of basic skills programs
- Assist in training

SEAs may also be authorized (by funding agreement) to carry out the following activities:

- Develop a comprehensive statewide program to coordinate all federal and state programs providing basic skills instruction
- Plan activities that involve administrators, teachers, parents in developing improvement strategies
- Conduct statewide assessments (students and faculty)
- Conduct or provide for inservice (all educators)
- Provide technical assistance and dissemination of information regarding basic skills

Table 2

Title II Basic Skills:
Key Elements of Local (LEA) and School Activities

Local Education Agencies (LEAs), working with staff of public and private schools, will:

- Set forth a systematic comprehensive strategy for planning and implementation of basic skills instruction
- Address the needs of all students
- Utilize, in a coordinated fashion, federal, state, and local resources

Comprehensive school plans must include:

- Involvement of teachers, administrators, parents in planning
- Diagnostic assessment of student needs
- Establishment of learning goals and objectives
- Provision for preservice and inservice for all educators
- Provision for enlistment of parent support
- Evaluation of program effectiveness, including periodic testing of student achievement, publication of test results by grade level and by school
- Consideration of assessment data collected pre-elementary to be available to parents and to teachers of subsequent grades.

Table 3

Title II Basic Skills:
Parent Involvement

States can make grants for parent involvement, supporting such activities as:

- Development and dissemination of materials that parents may use at home
- Encouragement of closer parent-teacher contacts to coordinate home-school learning
- Planning, developing, improving centers accessible to parents to provide materials and professional guidance for home learning
- Training programs for parents in home learning

EDGAR: Education Division General Administrative Regulations

The U.S.O.E. Basic Skills Task Force in 1979 stated this problem:

- How do we maintain the integrity of each program and yet accomplish needed coordination?

(Drennan & Jackson, 1979)

An analysis of the legislation concerned with basic skills was conducted. The result was identification of overlapping areas in 22 federal programs (see Table 4 for a list of programs), and the development of a resource document presenting matrices of these areas in category groupings such as staff development, parental involvement, and coordination. (Drennan & Jackson, 1979).

It became necessary to ensure that provision was made to clarify reciprocal legislation. The Education Division General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR, April 1980, p. 22524) present the rules relating to coordination (see Table 5). While it is clear that coordination must occur, three points should be noted:

- "To the extent possible" suggests that one begins with what is feasible
- "One or more of the following" suggests that implementation may occur incrementally
- The methods of coordination listed relate to process and not content.

This last point is particularly important. Coordination does not mean integrated instruction across reading, writing, and mathematics. (Imagine the problems of classroom management). It does mean collaboration or cooperation among agencies (state, local, school) and among administrators within an agency.

Table 4

Federal Programs Involved in Basic Skills Improvement

I

I Migrants

II A & B Basic Skills
IX Sec. 921-2 Proficiency and Achievement Testing Assistance

IV (A), C Improvement in Local Practice
IV D Guidance, Counseling & Testing
V B Strengthening SEA Management

IV (A) B Instructional Materials & School Library Resources

VI Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA)

VII Bilingual Education
Indian Education

XIII Adult Education

V A Head Start

IX A Gifted and Talented

V B Follow Through

IV A 4 & 5 Trio

V A Teacher Corps

V B Teacher Centers

PL 94-142 BEH/Special Education

Career Education

Vocational Education

IV Sec. 416 OED (Evaluation & Dissemination)

IV Sec. 422 National Diffusion Network
III Sec. 303

III Strengthening Developing Institutions
Educational Information Centers

III C Arts in Education

(Drennan & Jackson, 1979)

Table 5

Education Division General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR): Coordination

1006.580 Coordination with other activities.

(a) A State and a subgrantee shall, to the extent possible, coordinate each of its projects with other activities that are in the same geographic area served by the project and that serve similar purposes and target groups.

(b) A State and a subgrantee whose project includes activities to improve the basic skills of children, youth, or adults shall, to the extent possible, coordinate its project with other basic skills activities that are in the same geographic area served by the project.

(c) For the purposes of this section, "basic skills" means reading, mathematics, and effective communication, both written and oral.

(d) The State or subgrantee shall continue its coordination during the period that it carries out the project.

1006.581 Methods of coordination.

Depending on the objectives and requirements of a project a grantee shall use one or more of the following methods of coordination:

(a) Planning the project with organizations and individuals who have similar objectives or concerns.

(b) Sharing information, facilities, staff, services or other resources.

(c) Engaging in joint activities such as instruction, needs assessment evaluation, monitoring, technical assistance, or staff training.

(d) Using the grant or subgrant funds so as not to duplicate or counteract the effects of funds used under other programs.

(e) Using the grant or subgrant funds to increase the impact of funds made available under other programs.

(Federal Register, April, 1980)

It can also mean cooperation among teachers in providing instruction to meet student needs. For instance, if it is not in the best interest of a particular student to be pulled out of the classroom for Title I, bilingual education, and special education, the teachers involved may coordinate their efforts to redesign the way in which that child receives basic skills instruction. Or (another example) teachers may work together to explore ways in which basic skills achievement may be influenced if other areas -- science, the arts -- are used as a catalyst for student motivation (Dobbs, 1979). Or, (a third example) it may mean cross-grade articulation of teaching and learning of reading (K-12) with high school teachers working with teachers of the feeder schools -- middle and elementary.

While it is possible to initiate such activities at the school level and at the same time work at administrative coordination, the former is unlikely to bring about much improvement unless the latter becomes a reality.

THE THEORETICAL RATIONALE

It is not uncommon to find major areas of disagreement between practitioners, researchers, and policymakers; each criticizes the others, often arguing that the reality of one is the fantasy (or nightmare) of the others. However, in recent years, there have been attempts to increase mutual understanding, with each group taking into account the knowledge and experience of the other two.

In the case of coordination for the improvement of basic skills, there has been communication among the three groups, and there is a knowledge base which can inform those involved in the improvement process. This section of the paper presents a synthesis of the relevant literature, beginning with a general definition of coordination and then continuing with a more detailed discussion of how coordination may be put into practice.

Coordination

In 1978, the director of the National Right to Read Program presented the following arguments:

> There are so many agencies and bureaus concerned with basic skills, that any one of them may dissipate much time, energy, and resources attacking problems that another has already overcome... The need for an on-going information-sharing process that allows faster utilization of the experience of others is quite obvious.
>
> (Schiffman & Smith, 1978)

The same argument is echoed by many others. From an organizational perspective, we may agree with Aiken and Hage (1968) who point out that the increased intensification of needs for greater resources makes coordination increasingly attractive. At the same time we recognize that the high autonomy needs of educators interfere with effective collaboration (Dertz, 1976).

If we recognize the realities of: reduction of resources, increasing concern for student achievement in basic skills, unnecessary duplication of effort within the same organization to accomplish the same task, and availability of relevant knowledge if only it could be accessed, we ought to accept the responsibility of attempting coordination in spite of the difficulties we will encounter.

The Nature of Coordination

When two or more individuals, units, division, or agencies work together in order to accomplish a specific task, the relationship may be anywhere in a range from a vertical director/subordinate structure to a horizontal structure of equal partnership -- collaboration.

- When effective collaboration occurs, there is high interdependence, with members acting on the following assumptions:
  - participants share resources (Rubin, 1980)
  - each is dependent on other(s) for accomplishment of work that each alone could not accomplish (Rath & Hagans, 1978)
  - there is a willingness to align one's own purposes with those of others, and to negotiate mutually acceptable comprises (Trist, 1978)
  - there is a common understanding of roles and responsibilities (Rath & Hagans, 1978)
  - mutual adaptations in a number of different areas will become necessary (Aiken & Hage, 1968)
  - there are: 1) active working partnerships among individuals and organizations; 2) shared responsibility and authority for policy making; 3) equal investment and benefits for participants; 4) common understanding of expectations, responsibilities and constraints; 5) interdependence in carrying out activities (Thompson, 1980).
- As implementation of the collaborative effort gets underway the following may become apparent:
  - organizations attempt to maximize their gains and minimize their losses --- they want to lose as little power and autonomy as possible in their exchange for other resources (Aiken & Hage, 1968)

- the key elements are equity and dependability: members experience balanced outcomes in terms of reward for effort, depend on one another to provide goods and services required to fulfill the contract on a regular basis (Pasmore et al., 1978)
- political conflicts over interorganizational and intraorganizational "turf" may develop (Rubin, 1980)
- leaders sacrifice a small amount of autonomy for gains in staff, funds, etc. (Aiken & Hage, 1968)
- cooperation = exchange. If exchange takes place and if agreements reached are perceived to be equitable, a cooperative system will develop (Pasmore et al., 1978)
- some groups may be unwilling to share in decision making (and the related responsibility) (Rath & Hagans, 1978)
- imbalance results in the more dependable group demanding greater rewards or offering less effort than the reliable group (Pasmore et al., 1978).

Coordination as Innovation

In most instances coordination will require individual and organizational change; it will be an innovation. In planning and implementing a new effort, such as intergroup coordination, phases of activity are likely to loop, spiral, or run simultaneously. These phases are:

- Identify/modify constraints/opportunities
- Mobilize support
- Engage in planning
- Provide training and assistance
- Implement incrementably by topic, site, population, or organizational unit
- Design and conduct monitoring

} With provision for appropriate: communication, participation, motivation

(Roberts, 1978)

These phases, identified by analysis and synthesis of the results of major studies of educational change, are very similar to the stages of collaborative efforts discussed by Rubin (1980):

- formulation = determination of common interests, commitment, leadership by "a few dedicated people"
- maturation = issues of purpose are resolved, policies develop
- permanence = proven success leads to high credibility and long-term success

(Rubin, 1980)

Putting Coordination into Practice

The remainder of this paper reviews the literature on coordination and collaboration, using the phases of implementation of an innovation as a framework. It is influenced by the assumption that educators receiving federal funds for the improvement of basic skills will find this information relevant to their responsibilities relating to coordination.

Constraints and Opportunities

Using the rationale of Lewin's force field analysis, it is useful to begin by examining factors inhibiting or facilitating coordination with a view not to enhancing the facilitators (which can often result in increasing the resistance or strength of the barriers), but rather with the intention of developing ways to reduce the negative influence of the barriers.

Barriers to coordination fall into three categories: resources, motivation, and leadership.

Resources. In terms of resources, coordination is most demanding of staff time and expertise. If allocation of funds has resulted in emphasis on products, facilities, equipment etc. rather than in people, coordination will be extremely difficult.

> An organization with no surplus reserves available could hardly afford joint programs ... there must be some slack in the resource base ... before any cooperative venture is likely.
>
> (Aiken & Hage, 1968)

Three strategies may be considered: 1) reallocation of funds to buy competent staff, 2) reconsideration of priorities resulting in reassignment of staff and/or accountable tasks, or 3) negotiation by the low-

resource group with the higher resource groups to contribute to the coordination effort in ways demanding less staff time or expertise.

Two barriers occur through staff assignment to collaborative projects: 1) unskillful people are assigned, or 2) skillful but overloaded people are assigned. For coordination tasks, subject-specific expertise is not necessarily the primary criterion for staff selection. Rather, those involved in linking one program with another should be individuals who are competent, have strong negotiating skills, and who are not already suffering role overload (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977). Also, they need to have a reservoir of personal energy to sustain progress during setbacks and conflicts, and to have a wide repertoire of systematic problem-solving skills (Crandall, 1977).

Task Motivation. In terms of motivation we need to consider why each organization, group, or individual is involved in the coordination effort. We need to recognize the differences between a theoretical rationale or an executive decision based on such arguments as those presented earlier, and the real reasons and operational needs of those carrying out the tasks. Two major barriers exist: 1) a desire to rely on the security of content expertise when managerial or process expertise is more appropriate; and 2) a desire to co-opt or dominate another individual or group when an egalitarian attitude is essential to success.

When collaboration is effective, there is common understanding of expectations of what each is to do and of the constraints under which each is working (Rath & Hagans, 1978). However, especially in the early

stages of the effort, tasks cannot always be clearly prescribed (Pasmore et al., 1978). It should be understood, at every phase and level of activity, that collaboration requires work restructuring and continual task redefinition (Pasmore et al., 1978; Rubin, 1980, Trist, 1978). Therefore, any individual or group about to become involved in coordination with others needs to be motivated by a belief in the value of contributing to a common goal (Pasmore et al., 1978). "Attempting tasks that will substantially reduce the independence or visibility of any single organization will increase resistance by participants" (Trist, 1978).

If opportunistic motivation prevails, but coordination is mandated, those involved would be advised to be selective about the task areas addressed by the interagency or intraorganizational group (which may be referred to as an action set)

Leadership. Leadership is defined here as the ability to manage change by causing: 1) restructuring, 2) piecing out the system or the work, or 3) maintaining the status quo -- whichever is most appropriate at a given time. Such ability may or may not use power and influence in a controlling/coercive manner.

Probably the strongest barrier to effective coordination is the fear of loss of organizational autonomy and program visibility (Kelty, 1976). "Suggestions that they share their sacred domains with other groups not only evoke non-cooperation, but outright combativeness" (Rubin, 1980).

At the same time "Coordination is inhibited when there is a lack of strong leadership, and when those involved have insufficient authority

to influence decisions and actions" (Rath & Hagans, 1978). For instance, the best efforts of coordination across programs within a school can be thwarted without the support and appropriate action of the local education agency.

Two different strategies help to reduce these barriers. One requires negotiation between organizations or by members of an action set to establish operating procedures that ensure equal power and participation (Thompson, 1980). Early negotiations also identify specific areas or audiences that may be "off limits" to the action set for one reason or another. (For example, library/media services may agree to use a given amount of money allocated for basic skills to purchase materials identified by the action set, but may make it clear that the coordinating group has no influence in other purchasing decisions.)

The second strategy is described as follows:

> Leadership within action sets will be assumed by the most powerful of influential organization, and the greater the concentration of power in the hands of one organization's authorities, the easier the action set coordination will be
>
> (Aldrich, 1979)

This does <u>not</u> necessarily mean a director/subordinate relationship. Power and influence used judiciously do not exclude participatory decision making and equal distribution of work and rewards. Early awareness of the relative capability of action set members, with subsequent acceptance of the leadership of one organization or individual may well save a great deal of time and energy.

Commitment and Support

> The organizational management and the operational staff must both be persuaded that collaboration is advantageous, so operating conditions include: cadre of highly committed people to contribute time and energy; sustained support of powerful individuals; steps taken to establish credibility; motivation of active interest.
>
> (Rubin, 1980)

Coordination of efforts to improve basic skills, requires an extremely complex set of activities in generating commitment and support if the final goal (several years away from achievement) is real involvement among 22 federal programs, across state, local, and school activity, and across hierarchies within each organization. The generation of commitment and mobilization of support are simultaneous, multi-directional, and on-going. For instance, from the teacher's perspective ...

> The RAND study indicates that effective support -- from district staff and school principals -- includes moral support illustrated by acceptance and approval of the project, reinforcement and enthusiasm toward teachers putting classroom improvements into practice, and establishment of good working relationships between and among individuals and groups involved in the project. Practical support is illustrated by real commitment of resources, provisions for training and on-going assistance, and classroom visits followed by constructive feedback.
>
> (Roberts, 1978, referring to Berman et al., 1977)

Techniques for encouraging commitment include: 1) establishing an initial success (Congreve, 1969); 2) giving voice to advocates in the organization supporting collaboration, 3) organizing advocacy campaigns, publicizing exemplary or innovative practices relating to the alliance's goals, and working at achieving a positive image (Rubin, 1980).

Within an organization that positive image is enhanced when it can be seen that there are clear rewards for individuals involved in the collaborative effort (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977; Rubin, 1980). Rewards may include: recognition for accomplishment (e.g., financial, public acknowledgement); release time; promotion; or whatever the informal system recognizes as a reward within that particular office or school.

Planning

> The basic approach of interactive planning is to "make it happen." It is the design of a desirable future and the invention of ways to bring it about...it focuses on all three aspects of an organization -- the parts (but not separately), the whole, and the environment. Instead of planning away from a current state we start planning toward a desired state.
>
> (Ackoff, 1977)

Planning is not an event but a process which should be sufficiently flexible or adaptive to provide for dealing with unanticipated problems as they arise. In initiating planning/negotiation for coordination, there must be: 1) a clear statement of intent (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977); 2) anticipation of barriers (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977); 3) establishment of mutually acceptable ground rules (Congreve, 1969); 4) identification of common group interests (Rubin, 1980); 5) goal congruence between the new collaborative organization and the member components or agencies (Rubin, 1980).

The initiator -- organization or individual -- might well select an activity area of high interest and relatively low "turfdom" such as parent involvement, or a task of clear cognitive dimensions (such as assessment of student needs) rather than one with potentially high affective diso-

nance (which will vary from one organization to another). In selecting the area of collaborative activity, action set members should: 1) mutually develop the plan (Congreve, 1969); 2) have realistic parameters (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977); 3) deal with real issues (Congreve, 1969); 4) focus on a specific project or task (Rath & Hagans, 1978); 5) determine a narrow focus, with few objectives, leading to accomplishments that bring about clear improvements and which provide products or services that would otherwise be unavailable (Rubin, 1980).

Training and Assistance

Given the fact that Title II and the EDGAR coordination rules originate from a federal agency and are to be implemented by the various levels of the educational system, there is a responsibility for each level to provide training and/or technical assistance to those lower in the hierarchical structure. For instance, the U.S. Education Department has entered into agreement with a consortium of five organizations* that will provide technical assistance to state and local Title II grantees.

Barriers and facilitators relating to provision for training and assistance are presented in Table 6 (Roberts, 1978). The implicit message, especially true of collaborative efforts, is that everyone needs to understand what is going on. Relevance and clarity are the two key criteria.

---

*The educational research and development laboratory, CEMREL, Inc., in St. Louis, Missouri, is the consortium leader. The NETWORK, in Massachusetts, serves New England and states along the Atlantic coast.

Table 6

Processes - Training and Assistance

Facilitators	Barriers
Use of synergy	
- demonstration*	Role confusion*
- experiential learning*	Role overload*
- psychological reinforcement*	Vulnerability*
- face-to-face communication*	Lack of comprehension*
- quality materials/clear information*	
- concrete activities/assignments*	
- feedback mechanisms*	
- regular/frequent in school meetings*	Isolation*
- cross-school meetings	
- mutually agreed assessment measures*	Early/threatening evaluation
- ongoing assessment*	Invisibility
Use of incentives	
- recognition for accomplishment*	Threat of punishment
- inservice credit*	
- perceived achievement*	
- opportunity for professional growth*	
- increased responsibility*	
- allowance for individual differences	Variability
- allowance for release time	Teachers' lack of time

*"strong" items

Incremental Implementation

It has already been stated that it is advisable to introduce coordination cautiously, selecting an area of activity that is relatively "safe", and will bring a quick initial success. After one element or program has been incorporated, another may be introduced. If leadership, motivation, and resources are good, several elements or programs may become involved very quickly. In that case, energy will be spent on implementation in an operational sense rather than on building commitment, planning, or trying to "teach" everybody about Title II and coordination for basic skills improvement.

At the operational level, two points should be kept in mind: 1) there should be careful sequencing of tasks and specific division of labor (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977), and 2) collaboration works most easily when tasks are straightforward (Crandall, 1977).

Communication

Throughout all phases of activity, attention must be paid to communication -- the patterns or structures that influence the flow of information; the mechanisms used (formal and informal); and the nature, amount, and purposes of messages received and transmitted.

Structure. There is considerable evidence indicating that the traditional pyramid communication structure is inappropriate in a complex collaborative effort which may best be described as a dispersed organization.

> The dispersed client-centered organization appears to require an organizational structure that maximizes the flow of information between the various members rather than relying on rules and standard procedures.
>
> (Louis & Sieber, 1979)

This suggests matrix management as one possible alternative, where members of action sets may be directly accountable to a program supervisor (e.g., in special education) and also required to share information with a coordinator (e.g., a central office Title II coordinator, or a person coordinating efforts for a group of schools).

Another structure might be a network, in which information sharing rather than direction given is emphasized (Pasmore et al., 1978). A network, consisting of member groups in a consortium, allows each action set to maintain a slightly higher degree of autonomy than is possible in a

matrix. No matter what structure is used, it is essential to recognize that:

> More highly differentiated organizations, which are characterized by decentralization and autonomy between departments, require greater efforts and a larger number of formal mechanisms to achieve integration.
>
> (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967)

Formality and informality. It is clear that effective coordination requires both formal communication mechanisms (e.g., routine regular documentation of interagency interactions), and a strong informal system (e.g., volunteering of information between peers).

> While informal communication is very important, it is also essential to maintain formal structures to promote collegial decision making and exchange of information. Where there are few or no formal structures that promote collegial decision making and exchange of information, the informal structures will become attenuated or weakened.
>
> (Louis & Sieber, 1979)

In designing or considering communication structures and mechanisms it is important to understand why a particular system is more appropriate than others. In coordination of differentiated groups, three main points should be considered.

First, individuals involved in action sets initially suffer role confusion and often continue to suffer frustration or feelings of inadequacy. In this case "the support and influence of peers might be of equal or greater importance than communication with a supervisor" (Louis & Sieber, 1979).

Next, the complexity of coordination results in many individuals and action sets having a variety of information which may or may not be useful to other members. Here, traditional formal upward reporting is not

cost-effective, but social networks are extremely important (Louis & Sieber, 1979). Thus, action set members need to have legitimate opportunities to interact with their counterparts in order to facilitate effective networking.

Third, supervisors and/or managers need accurate up-to-date information since without it organizational intelligence and decision making may suffer seriously (Louis & Sieber, 1979). They do not need all information about everything, and they should not wait for formal end-of-the-month reports. Encouragement of lateral communication will reduce the burden on supervisors and expand the problem-solving resources available to the organization (Louis & Sieber, 1979; Pasmore, et al., 1978). Supervisors need to give immediate feedback so that staff learn to be appropriately selective about information offered. Supervisors also need to recognize the realities of the difficulties of collaboration and to adopt an interactive problem-solving management approach rather than an authoritarian stance of high distance.

Nature of messages. While we may argue that the ideal is rational behavior and data-based decision making, "under circumstances of imperfect knowledge, some decisions will undoubtedly be irrational" (Aiken & Hage, 1968).

Since effective decision-making is a combination of relevant information and competent leadership it may be argued that messages transmitted fall into two categories: 1) substance, and 2) process. The former is determined partly by the task at hand, and partly by the formal and informal structures used. The latter is more affective than cognitive, often unspoken, relating more to the use of power and influence.

Power is a resource, while influence is a process. (Compare a principal who has power of position, but is ineffective in his/her use of influence, with a teacher's aide who has little power, but brings influence to bear in a variety of ways.) "To the extent that power interferes with mutual cooperation it should be redistributed" (Pasmore, et al., 1978), since "collaboration calls for individuals and groups to share in the decision making process and to negotiate solutions to issues of mutual concern" (Rath & Hagans, 1978). This means that influence must be applied to reduce the impact of rank and status that results in cross-level conflict. Such influence has to be motivated by a sincere orientation to coordination rather than by a desire for personal gain or organizational visibility. It must be understood that "coercion and dominance are barriers to collaboration" (Trist, 1978). It must also be understood that in any situation one individual or organization will take a leadership role and ...

> take the initiative to ensure that members are brought together, that collegial relationships are formed, that information is exchanged, and so forth ... The strong leader in this instance will behave as an idea broker and consultant rather than a source of firm and final decision.
>
> (Louis & Sieber, 1979)

Monitoring

The final phase of the implementation framework used for the foregoing discussion is "monitoring." There are few studies of collaboration or coordination; those reported have used ethnographic rather than quantitative comparison methodology and have refrained from making judgmental reports too early in the life of the project.

It would be desirable to have members of the action sets participate in the design of a monitoring system, or at the least to have the opportunity to review criteria for success. Specific approaches that may be considered include: an action research model; ethnographic participant observation resulting in a descriptive analysis; systematic documentation by action set members followed by document analysis; external study of elements determined by action set representatives.

REVIEW AND OPINION

The previous sections of this paper synthesized the literature relating to organizational coordination and collaboration. This section presents the author's opinion on some elements perceived to be crucial to successful coordination.

Structure

Units within an organization -- such as a local education agency -- or units of several organizations -- such as a group of schools -- agree to work together for a common purpose. The collection of units may be called a collaborative. As work gets under way task areas are determined and staff are assigned. These work groups may be called action sets. Theoretically, each action set is equal to the others, and each unit of the collaborative is equal to other units. In practice, control fluctuates according to the nature of the work in hand. Over time, all may be equal, but at any given moment, there is a subordinate/superordinate relationship. However, if a collaborative and its action sets were presented as an organizational chart, the traditional pyramid of boxes would not be appropriate. Instead, we might see a "wheel" with loosely-coupled action sets at the ends of the "spokes."

Leadership

While functional leadership may occur within and between action sets (with individuals taking charge according to the expertise needed for specific tasks), the overall leadership of the collaborative is not shared between units. Rather, an individual (often the initiator of the project)

becomes the leader. This person energizes the effort, initiates the structure, and coordinates the activities. He/she is non-partisan in relating to member units, favoring none (not even his/her own "home" units), responsive to the needs of individual units or action sets, yet consistently acting for the best interests of the collaborative as a whole. The role may be rotated, perhaps by election, among units, but the characteristics remain constant, reflecting a humanistic philosophy which encourages coordination rather than competition.

Values

The introduction to this paper implied that collaboration and coordination are perceived to be valuable strategies for the improvement of basic skills. This may be true. However, it is probably not true in all cases for all tasks; we should not jump on yet another band wagon if it does not take us where we need to go. Ineffective collaboration could well be more expensive than an individualistic and isolated project.

Where it is feasible and desirable to share resources, where the same task needs to be accomplished by several groups, where several groups can benefit from shared information . . . coordination should occur. Even on a small scale where the needs of one child are satisfied by the knowledge and skills of two or more teachers . . . collaboration should occur. When we all have an equal stake in the consequences -- good or bad -- we should work together.

Collaboration and Coordination

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